



Sustain Our Future

By **JERRY DE BIN**, Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and **SHARON RUSHTON**, Step Outside®

Aldo Leopold, the father of modern conservation, described conservation as "...the state of harmony between people and the land." A half-century after those words were penned, almost three-fourths of all Alabamians live in urban or suburban areas. Natural resource managers suffer the effects of a society now disconnected from the land. The Alabama STEP OUTSIDE program is a call to action to reverse that trend.

Five Alabama conservation partners are pleased to announce "Step Outside," a mentor-based program that unites conservationists to advance our rich outdoors heritage. A formal agreement outlines commitments of the five Step Outside partners: the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, the Alabama Farmers Federation, the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association and The Nature Conservancy (Alabama Chapter).

Local Step Outside events will introduce newcomers to traditional outdoors activities such as hiking, fishing, bird watching, canoeing, hunting, camping and sport shooting. Local sponsorship of Step Outside events is open to conservation organizations, sporting goods manufacturers and retailers, hunting and fishing clubs, outdoors recreation outfitters, and corporate and private landowners.

Step Outside is founded on the principle that every person deserves an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. It is our responsibility as outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen to create such opportunities. Many Alabamians do this already,

but many more need to get involved. Step Outside will rally conservationists around a common mission: reconnecting Alabama's urbanized society with the outdoors. Now is the time to act. Now is the time for every interested person to get involved.

Commissioner Riley Boykin Smith said, "The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is committing personnel and resources to ensure Step Outside is successful. The other partners are committed as well. Working together with a variety of wildlife and outdoors enthusiasts, we

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will build an effective Step Outside program. The initial cornerstones have now been laid, but the building process has only begun. From this point on, more groups and individuals will become involved in its design and construction."

Regardless of your particular hobbies associated with wildlife and the outdoors, chances are that a family member or close friend first introduced you to it. Instilling a love for nature is a one-on-one process that begins with people closest to you. Your personal invitation to Step Outside is, without a doubt, the easiest and most enjoyable way for first-timers to try their hand at target shooting, archery, hunting and fishing.

Why do it now? It's fun. Any time is a good time to spend outdoors with family and friends.

You Can Help Make a Difference

Individuals—You open up a whole new world for individuals. Helping them reach a comfort level with a variety of activities in the outdoors can have a profound effect on people. They become more aware of the world around them, learn respect for nature, witness the beauty of the natural world, increase their confidence and self-esteem, and develop new friends.

Families—Families who share outdoor experiences share a level of joy and family bonding that goes beyond the day-to-day experiences to unique and treasured moments. The old saying is still true, "Hunt with your children today and you won't have to hunt for them tomorrow." Participating in target shooting, archery, hunting or fishing as a family enhances communications and sharing more than other types of family activities. It also creates a scrapbook of lifetime memories.

The environment—Individuals who participate in outdoor activities are at the forefront of protecting and conserving the environment. They become involved in local and national activities related to the environment, and they contribute to fish and wildlife conservation through licenses and excise taxes. A recent survey indicates that over 2 million people spend some \$3 billion annually participating in wildlife-associated recreation in Alabama.

Traditional outdoor sports—Once people experience target shooting, fishing, archery and hunting, they understand that these are wholesome activities that provide benefits both to the individual participating in the activity and the management of our fish and wildlife. They spread the good word about outdoor sports and have an effect on others' attitudes toward them.

There's another equally good reason to introduce a newcomer to traditional outdoor activities. Family members and close friends have traditionally passed their outdoor heritage to the next generation. Today, however, with people moving to cities and always on the move,

with increasing demands on free time and a greater variety of ways to spend that time, more of us miss out on a chance to understand and appreciate the outdoor experience. You can step in and change that. You can invite these people to Step Outside. You can make an impact with every individual you invite.

What's in it for you? Invite someone to Step Outside, and . . .

- Share the rewards of introducing someone to an experience you enjoy.
- Expand the circle of friends with whom you target shoot, hunt and fish.
- Make a personal contribution to ensuring a stronger future for traditional outdoor activities—and have fun while you're at it!
- Enjoy the rewards of being someone's mentor.

Whom can you invite? Everyone you know. Consider taking along your spouse, children, boss, church group, child's teacher, scout troop, child's coach, neighbor, parents, golf buddies, friend, niece or nephew, doctor, aerobics classmates, and co-workers.

Will they come? You can bet on it. Research by Roper Starch Worldwide concludes 67 million men and 47 million women would accept an invitation to go target shooting if asked. These statistics indicate an opportunity not only to increase participation in shooting sports, but in all traditional outdoor activities.

What a terrific opportunity for us all!

Which activities are best? It's wide open. The Step Outside concept is adaptable to scores of custom-tailored invitations. Here are a few ideas. Pick and choose the parts you like best.

Remember the family member who first got you hooked on target shooting, hunting or fishing? Return the favor. Play host to a family member for a day of outdoor activities. How about your niece?

The next time your skeet or archery club has a competitive event, ask your congressman or city councilman to drop by and give it a try. It's a great way to educate legislators who vote on wildlife and conservation measures.

Know a student interested in hunting? Pledge to take him or her all the way through Hunter Education—from finding the course, providing transportation, and assisting in the purchase of the first license to taking the successful student on his or her first hunting trip.

As an experienced outdoor enthusiast, you're a prime candidate to invite and assist a physically challenged individual during a day outdoors. For example, Wheelin' Sportsmen of America is an Alabama-based organization committed to making the outdoors more accessible to everyone.

You'd like to cultivate stronger support for conservation issues among your local and state elected officials.

Introduce them to the wonders of the great outdoors. Extend an invitation to cancel appointments and spend an afternoon flyfishing, hunting, or canoeing with you.

Your favorite co-worker is taking another job. Keep the friendship alive by turning him or her into a hunting buddy. Invite him or her to join your friends next time you go afield.

How about extending an invitation to a member of the media? Call a local reporter or an anchorperson on your favorite local TV news program and ask him or her to Step Outside.

Step Outside partners are especially committed to a total team effort. A series of organizational meetings are being held across the state involving partners and prospective local sponsors. Any interested group or individual is invited to become part of the Alabama Step Outside campaign. Step Outside is more than a program; it is a contagious attitude. Catch it and pass it on.

To learn how you can help bring STEP OUTSIDE to your county, please contact:

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TREASURE Forest: 6 Steps to Success

Anyone owning 10 or more acres of forestland can be considered for the certified TREASURE Forest award. To be eligible, a landowner must do the following with respect to all their forestland in Alabama:

1. Identify one primary and at least one secondary management objective for the property based on the following list of choices: Timber Production; Wildlife; Recreation; Aesthetics; Environmental Education.

2. Possess or acquire a written multiple-use management plan for the property. Your local Alabama Forestry Commission office can help you identify options for obtaining a written management plan if one does not exist.

3. Actively practice multiple-use management on the property. Your local office of the Alabama Forestry Commission can supply you with information on the level of management activity necessary.

Once these items are in place, the following must occur to earn the award:

4. The property must be nominated by someone associated with one of the member agencies or groups of the Alabama Forestry Planning Committee. You may contact them and suggest a nomination if you feel your property or that of someone you know qualifies for the award.

5. The property must be inspected by a registered forester and wildlife biolo-

gist. Your local Alabama Forestry Commission office will arrange the inspection.

6. The nomination and inspection report must be submitted to the TREASURE Forest Subcommittee of the Alabama Forestry Planning Committee for review and approval.

7. If you would like to be considered for the certified TREASURE Forest award, or know of someone else who may qualify, contact your local office of the Alabama Forestry Commission or other member agency/group of the Alabama Forestry Planning Committee. These organizations are listed on page 2 of this magazine. They will be happy to assist you with the certification process.